



A TRAGEDY

THE CRIME OF THE BROKERS OFFICE.

J. E. MOTT.

CHAPTER VII—(Continued.)

He returned to the depot whence he had come, and the very next train carried him back to New York city.

He thought of the exchange of overcoats which he had made with his traveling acquaintance, and muttered:

"By Jupiter! I left the keys and the wax impressions in my coat pocket. I hope they will not be the means of getting the young fellow with whom I exchanged coats into trouble."

When Stuart Harland alighted from the railway train the officers who were on the watch when the stranger whom he had followed, leaped upon the platform, were still at their post.

Harland had not taken five steps, when a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder, and as the light of the policeman's lantern was reflected full in his face, the officer said, in a stern voice, as he grasped the young man's arm:

"You are my prisoner! I arrest you on the charge of being a fugitive from justice!"

These two police officers were watching for Stuart Harland, for to them Sergeant Smith had wired the young man's description, and when they stopped the man who had taken Harland's overcoat, they were on the alert for the latter.

Stuart Harland's surprise was unbounded, and he was indignant, as well.

"What is the meaning of this outrage? Here is certainly some mistake!" he exclaimed.

In a few words the police officers acquainted him with the fact of John Oakburn's murder, of which Sergeant Smith's dispatch had informed them.

"One of the officers added:

"My instructions are simply to arrest you and return you to New York City at once."

"I suppose I must submit, but if you will only permit me to visit the house of a friend for a few moments, I shall be under obligations to you," said Stuart.

"Impossible; the return train will leave in ten minutes," replied the officer.

Stuart groaned.

"I have had my journey for naught," he muttered.

Then he thought of Marion Oakburn and the singular circumstance that she was in the broker's office at midnight. He recalled her frightened manner, and his mind was troubled.

office after hearing the banker's communication about the marked money, re-entered, but he was unobserved, for Pratt was now the central figure of the assemblage.

"The fact is, gentlemen, Stuart Harland has been indulging in speculations far beyond his means, and, as he deceived us regarding his financial status, he has become our debtor to the sum of ten thousand dollars. We were led to suppose he could control that amount of the fortune which it is understood he will inherit. We hold Mr. Harland's note for the amount of his indebtedness, which is now several days overdue. Here is the note, sir," continued Pratt, as he placed the paper in the coroner's hands.

The day preceding the murder, that is, the day before yesterday, we sent him a note, informing him that unless he settled with us, we would apply to his wealthy aunt, whose heir he is said to be. He replied that if we did so he was ruined; that his aunt was particularly opposed to stock speculating, and that she had often warned him against it, saying that her money should never be risked in that way. In fact, Harland stated that he feared his aunt would disinherit him if she found him out.

"It was my wish to give the young man time, for I pitied him, but my partner is a hard man and he was inexorable. Mr. Harland had mortally offended him in some way, and he vowed he would have his money or he would make the exposure Harland dreaded.

"Harland declared that he had no way to pay the money, but he obtained my partner's promise not to move in the matter until to-day. Now, it seems to me almost certain that his motive for the murder and the robbery was to obtain the money to pay us, and thus save himself from the loss of his aunt's fortune, which might have resulted from an exposure."

Thus Pratt concluded.

Harland had listened in silence, but his eyes flashed, and his rage was betrayed in his face.

"You are a liar and a scoundrel, Dan Pratt!" he exclaimed. "You are conspiring to ruin me. You hold my note for a thousand dollars. If it purports to be for more, it has been tampered with. Moreover, the note I can meet to that amount, as I have the money on deposit in bank and meant to send you a cheque to-day."

"Poor young man. He is plunging into the depths of falsehood and deception," said Pratt, in a mournful tone.

"We have found out his motive. The case is clear now," muttered the police sergeant.

CHAPTER VIII.

The faces of the audience, who had listened to Pratt's evidence, betrayed the impression he had made.

Stuart was regarded in such a manner that he was sure Pratt was believed by the majority.

True, none of the stolen money had been found in Stuart Harland's possession, but this could not be regarded as an evidence of his innocence, since he had ample time to secrete the proceeds of the robbery.

Thus reflected the jurors.

There was little further evidence to hear, and presently the Coroner submitted the matter to the jury, who thereupon rendered a verdict without leaving their seats, that John Oakburn came to his death at the hands of some person, whose positive identity was unknown, but that the evidence was such as to fasten a strong suspicion upon Stuart Harland.

Thereupon, the Coroner directed that Stuart be held a prisoner to await further developments.

Stuart retained his composure admirably, as he listened to the verdict of the coroner's jury, and heard the order which condemned him to detention in prison.

The officers were about to conduct the unfortunate young man from the office, when Jason Garrison came forward and grasped his hand in a warm greeting.

"You will tell Edna that I am falsely accused," said Stuart.

"Yes, yes. She will never doubt you," answered the broker.

Harland was moving to the door, but the two officers, when Marion Oakburn gained his side, and said to him in a tone of the most positive conviction:

"Take with you the assurance that you will be saved."

Stuart was conducted to Ludlow street jail forthwith, and his mind was in a condition of doubt and trouble most harassing. So many circumstances of a surprising nature had crowded themselves into his life within the last few hours, that he was dazed and confused.

In the midst of the confusion in his mind, he saw constantly, however, like a portrait which had been stamped indelibly upon the camera of memory, the horror-stricken face of Marion Oakburn as he had seen her when she left the office in which her father had been murdered. Her face haunted him like a ghost that would not be laid, and as he reflected he thought:

"When she came out of the office her father must have been dead. Before I saw her step out of that apartment the murder had been done.

"Where was she when the awful crime was consummated?"

There was a horrible doubt in Stuart Harland's mind then.

"But, no, no, no, such a thing is so entirely inconsistent with Marion's character that the monstrous thought that she may be implicated in the murder of her own father cannot find a lodgment in my mind—never and never was she in the office at that hour; and why was she in such a state of terror when she left it?"

These unanswerable questions naturally suggested themselves to Stuart's mind.

Then he recollected how he had been awakened by the loud noise, which he could not account for, and he thought now that it must have been the detonation of the pistol shot that had killed John Oakburn that he had heard.

He did not know that Paxton advanced the theory that the assassin's weapon was an air-pistol. But he had caught enough of the police sergeant's mutterings to learn that the time of the murder had been fixed at twenty minutes of one, and so he knew that John Oakburn must have been dead when Marion left the office.

Despite all his suspicions and conjectures, Harland had not mentioned the incident of his having seen Marion leaving the office, for he had always entertained the most exalted opinions of her character, and he had reasoned:

"There is mystery inexplicable in Marion Oakburn's conduct, but I cannot believe her guilty. There is some explanation which will yet be made that will clear up all this dark affair, and I shall not regret my silence."

The ignoble thought that he might direct suspicion from himself by revealing his knowledge of Marion's secret visit to the office never entered his mind.

"Who can be the guilty one?" Stuart asked himself, and although there was no clue to guide his suspicions, by some mental process which he could scarcely have explained himself, his thoughts reverted to Levi Kredge, the janitor.

Perhaps the vague suspicions of this man, which entered his mind unbidden, were prompted by an opinion which he had recently formed that Levi Kredge was a spy and a sneak.

Stuart had twice caught the fellow with his ear at the key-hole of Jason Garrison's private office when confidential transactions were taking place there.

The second time Stuart's anger gained the ascendancy, and he kicked Kredge out of the office.

The young man had not forgotten that Kredge had flashed upon him a look of ferocious hate as he slunk away without resenting the assault.

The fellow had not uttered a word, but Stuart had read murder in the fierce burning light of his eyes, and from that moment he knew that the seemingly offensive and servile cripple was a dangerous man.

The thought now occurred to Stuart that it might have been the fellow's purpose in listening at key-holes and in spying about the office to obtain knowledge which would enable him to commit a robbery when there was money in the safe.

So deeply impressed did Stuart become with the idea that Kredge was concerned in the murder that he determined to mention the matter to Mr. Garrison, to whom he had never mentioned Kredge's eavesdropping, simply because he despised anything like tale-bearing.

As for himself, Stuart was sustained by the consciousness of innocence.

Meanwhile, when Daniel Pratt was making his statement before the coroner's jury, the elegant old gentleman who had entered the office just behind him seemed strangely excited. His hands were clinched, his lips compressed themselves into a rigid line, and his beautiful, luminous dark eyes blazed with a dangerous light.

Despite this evidence of his more than passing interest in the proceedings before the coroner's jury, he was, as we have stated, an entire stranger to all present.

Did he hold some secret knowledge of the actors in this life-drama which caused his emotion?

When he hastily left the office after he overheard the banker inform the coroner regarding the mark on the money which had been stolen from Jason Garrison's safe, he hurried directly to the office of Messrs. Pratt and Weeks.

The office of this firm of brokers was arranged something after the manner of a bank, and at the moment when the stately old gentleman entered it Mr. Weeks, Pratt's partner, was behind the screen-mounted counter engaged in counting a package of money.

Producing a one-hundred-dollar note from his pocketbook, the old gentleman whom we have followed strode forward, and presenting the note at a little wicket in the screen, he asked:

"Will you please accommodate me with change?"

"In one moment, sir," replied Weeks, and he continued counting the money, while the old gentleman remained standing beside the open-work screen.

From this position he obtained an excellent view of the money with which Weeks was engaged, and he made a discovery.

He plainly saw that each note in the package of money which Weeks was counting was marked distinctly with a "V" in the upper left-hand corner of the back of the same.

It seems that the stranger must have acted upon previously acquired knowledge when he hurried straight to the office of Pratt & Weeks, the moment he acquired the knowledge that the stolen money was all privately marked.

"It is the money John Oakburn's murderer stole from Jason Garrison's safe," said the aged stranger mentally, and he thought:

"Now, if he only gives me the marked money in change, I shall have the evidence that the stolen money has found its way into the possession of these wretches. Are these birds of prey the assassin's accomplices?"

In a moment or so Weeks had counted the marked money, and then he picked up the one hundred dollar note which the stranger had placed upon the counter.

"How will you have it?" he asked.

"In two fifties, please," replied the other, who had seen notes of that denomination in the package of marked money.

The stranger repressed the excitement he felt at the moment of suspense, as Weeks turned to the package of marked money. That he meant to give him two notes from that package in exchange for the one hundred dollar note was plain, for he began to remove the notes in search of the denominations required.

In a moment he found them.

With the two marked fifty dollar notes

in his hand, he was coming to the wicket to hand them to the stranger, when the door of the private department of the office, which was behind the counter, was dashed open and Pratt rushed in.

Springing to his partner's side, he seized his arm, and blessed in a whisper some communication which he did not bear.

Weeks uttered an oath and dropped the two marked fifty dollar notes back among the balance of the marked money. Then he unlocked the money drawer, and, taking out two other unmarked notes, he spitefully threw them at the aged stranger.

The latter secured them and turned to the door.

Glancing back over his shoulder, he saw Pratt and Weeks hastily gathering up the marked money.

"Pratt was just in time to foil my plan to obtain some of the marked money. They know the secret now. That scoundrel Kredge must have brought them the information," muttered the stranger.

There was a telegraphic "stock indicator" near the door, and the aged gentleman paused to consult the "tape."

He read "C. A. 400; 225 s. 60."

"Ah! Four hundred shares of the Chicago and Alton Railroad stock at two hundred and twenty-five dollars to be delivered at the seller's option, at any time within sixty days," muttered the old gentleman; and the readiness with which he translated the legend on the "indicator tape" told that he was no novice in the stock market.

Leaving the establishment of Messrs. Pratt & Weeks, he returned to the office, where the inquest was still in progress.

As he passed along the side of the building occupied by the firm of Pratt & Weeks he saw Levi Kredge emerge from the private entrance to the office.

He therefore possessed the positive certainty that the janitor had brought the scheming brokers the news that the stolen money was marked.

"This affair is growing more and more mysterious. Kredge must have known that the stolen money was in the possession of Pratt and Weeks. He is their spy, that is clear," he thought.

When he arrived at Garrison's office, again, he did not immediately enter the building, and while he stood before it, he saw Pratt approach and gain entrance to the office. He then entered himself, as stated.

At the conclusion of the inquest, the mysterious old gentleman, who was secretly interesting himself in the case of John Oakburn's murder, walked to Broadway and took the omnibus to the Astor House, for at this date Jacob Astor had not made his successful innovation, and there were no horse cars on the great business thoroughfare of the great city.

Some weeks previous to the occurrence of the incidents thus far recorded, the old gentleman had arrived at the hotel, and registered the name, "Richard Stanmore."

Mr. Stanmore seemed to be a stranger in the city, but to have a great deal of business with Wall street business men.

Particularly intimate were his commercial relations with the firm of Messrs. Marks & Buck, accommodation loan brokers, who had established themselves on Wall street a year previous. Also with Judson, Kirk & Son, another Wall street firm largely interested in various mining and railway speculations.

There was another firm, not on Wall street, with whom Mr. Stanmore was evidently on the best of business terms.

The firm in question was that of Benjamin & Co., a Jewish money-lending house which negotiated large loans, and to them in secret many a Wall street operator had been glad to come for financial aid when the market took a long run "the wrong way."

Almost every evening a representative of each of the firms mentioned was closeted with Mr. Stanmore in his apartments in the hotel.

Surprising as it may seem, however, in view of the fact we have mentioned, Mr. Stanmore was entirely unknown personally on Wall street, and he never visited the offices of the business firms we have mentioned.

All of this smacked of mystery, and there was much more in the doings of Mr. Stanmore that seemed to be inexplicable.

Very much to Mr. Garrison's surprise, the day following the night of the murder and robbery drew to a close, and no one from Pratt & Weeks called upon him to demand the money he owed them.

In view of the fact that Mr. Pratt had insisted that the \$78,000 must positively be paid that morning at an early hour, if the debtor wished to avoid unpleasant consequences, Mr. Garrison thought it was remarkable that he had not heard from him.

Pratt had hurried away from the broker's office without exchanging a word with Mr. Garrison.

Edna had been informed by her father of Stuart's imprisonment, and the devoted girl received the evil news bravely, for she was sustained by the belief that innocence would triumph.

Jason Garrison was in a state of intense nervous excitement and alarm. He shut himself up in his library, and at every unusual sound he started apprehensively, as though he was in momentary expectation of the occurrence of some terrible calamity.

At nightfall, as he was looking over the evening paper, he suddenly leaped to his feet, and exclaimed, excitedly:

"Can this be true! Can this be true!"

THE MANATEE.

One of the Strangest of Animals Native to America.

Of all the large animals of the American continent, none is more remarkable in form than the Manatee. Although this strange creature is of goodly size, often reaching a weight of several hundred pounds, and sometimes attaining a length of thirteen feet, yet I venture to say that not more than one person out of every four thousand in the United States could now arise and correctly answer the question, "What is a Manatee?" Whenever you mention the name of the creature to any one save a student of quadrupeds, of a surety you will have that question to answer forthwith.

The Manatee is an animal that lives exclusively in the water, and while it is shaped somewhat like a seal, it is very far from being one. I mention the seal by way of comparison solely because it is the only quadruped which can be used. The heavy, bag-like body, short neck, blunt nose and round head of our harbor seal do indeed suggest the form of the Manatee; but there the resemblance stops short.

Instead of having hind flippers like a seal, the body of the Manatee terminates in a very broad and very flat tail, which forms an admirable propeller. Its front limbs are simply big, flat paddles, by no means so shapely and useful as the front flippers of a sea lion: It has no hair—or, at least, none to speak of; a smooth, but very thick and tough skin, small weak eyes and a blunt nose. Instead of having teeth like a seal, and feeding on fish, it has only a set of rather weak molars, and lives solely on aquatic plants.

It lives in the mouths and lower reaches of rivers that flow into the sea in tropical latitudes, and while it does not object to salt water, it is most at home in water that is either brackish or else quite fresh; and the latter is preferred because of its aquatic vegetation. Unlike the seal, it is quite unable to come out on land.

I am glad to be able to say that even to-day this remarkable animal is an inhabitant of one portion of our strangely diversified United States.

For some particular reason, probably the abundance of good food combined with a good depth of the water a number of Manatees have chosen to inhabit the St. Lucie River, Brevard Co., Florida, which flows into Indian River, eighteen miles above Jupiter Inlet. Their presence there has been well known for twenty years or so; but, fortunately for them, they possess neither the checkered leather hide of the sad-eyed alligator, the spun glass plumes of the unhappy egret, or the delicious flesh of the wild turkey, and so as yet they have not been entirely exterminated.

Terrapin Farming.

An enterprising citizen of Fulton, Fla., Mr. Hole, is the pioneer in a new industry for that State—diamond-back terrapin farming. In his pen, built in the water, he has 1,000 terrapin and next year hopes to have five times that number. The Florida terrapin are of the same species as the Maryland terrapin. There is said to be no difference in the taste of the precious morsels, but there is a great difference in the price paid for them. While Florida terrapin bring only \$20, those taken from the waters of Chesapeake Bay sell at from \$36 to \$60 a dozen. Even at \$20 a dozen, however, Mr. Hole expects to make the business a paying one. The great difficulty to be encountered in supplying the demand is the unusual ability of the terrapin to hide themselves. They are easiest caught in the hatching season, when they make tracks in the sand to and from the nest; but this is the closed season, and the law provides a heavy penalty for violation. In the open season terrapin are captured in nets. Mr. Hole says that terrapin possess a fatal curiosity. If there are terrapin in a creek, all you have to do is to rap on the boat, and their little black heads will bob to the surface. Then the dragnet is called into play, and the terrapin are bagged.

A Horrible Tragedy.

A horrible tragedy took place not long since in a menagerie at Lyons. A clerk had the entrance of the menagerie, and was on friendly terms with the staff of the show. He made up his mind to be photographed in the central lions' cage, and went to the menagerie without the knowledge of the proprietor in order to carry out his intention. He entered the cage, which was, of course, empty, and while the photographer was getting ready his camera he approached the neighboring cage, in which an enormous lion, named Romulus, lay sleeping. He did all he could to excite the animal through the bars, and while pressing against the partition inadvertently opened the trap door, which separated the two cages. The lion sprang upon the unfortunate clerk, seized his head in its mouth, crushing it terribly. The young fellow was killed almost instantaneously.

CHAPTER VII—(Continued.)

The reflection as to how the public might construe his sudden night departure made him nervous and apprehensive.

He was not skilled in the art of hiding his emotions, and they betrayed what was passing in his mind.

The officers who accompanied him watched him closely, and they said between themselves:

"This business troubles him. He looks as though he were guilty."

Stuart never thought of examining the stranger's overcoat, which had come into his possession as we have seen.

His surprise and consternation were, therefore, quite genuine when the skeleton keys and wax impressions were taken from his pocket when he was brought before the coroner.

In a few words after this discovery, while the coroner motioned to the man who had last entered the broker's office to be silent, Stuart explained how the exchange of overcoats came about, as we have related it.

But Stuart's story was greeted with a murmur of incredulity, and it was clear that it was not generally credited.

Harland observed this, and he turned to the young clerk who had been one of his co-laborers in the broker's office, and said:

"I am sure no one of you would wish to impugn my veracity, and I ask you to say if you recognize this coat as mine. If you do not see that it was never made for me—that it is at least three sizes too large."

The broker's clerks replied affirmatively, and expressed their conviction that Stuart's word was not to be doubted. This was certainly a confirmation of Harland's statement.

The coroner now addressed the man who had last entered.

"That individual was Mr. Pratt, of the firm of Pratt & Weeks, who had ruined Jason Garrison."

Pratt was a portly, gross-looking man, with a black goatee, which owed its color to dye, as did also his scanty hair. He was bald, but this evidence of age was partially concealed by a skillful arrangement of the remnants of his colored locks. His features were heavy and sensual, but he had a smooth, insinuating manner, and always dressed in the height of fashion. Buttons were worn in a profusion, and his garments were well inclined to be loud.

"You wish to offer some evidence, sir?" said the coroner.

"Yes, sir; as I informed the officer at the door, who thereupon immediately ascertained the fact, much to my surprise."

Pratt was sworn and he said:

"Having received the information at my office that young Harland was under arrest, charged with the murder of John Oakburn, I deemed it my duty to appear here to give certain testimony, which it seems to me will establish the fact, that the man who was arrested for the murder of Jason Garrison was not the man who had last entered the office at that hour; and why was he in such a state of terror when he left it?"

CHAPTER VIII.

Stuart was conducted to Ludlow street jail forthwith, and his mind was in a condition of doubt and trouble most harassing.

So many circumstances of a surprising nature had crowded themselves into his life within the last few hours, that he was dazed and confused.

In the midst of the confusion in his mind, he saw constantly, however, like a portrait which had been stamped indelibly upon the camera of memory, the horror-stricken face of Marion Oakburn as he had seen her when she left the office in which her father had been murdered. Her face haunted him like a ghost that would not be laid, and as he reflected he thought:

"When she came out of the office her father must have been dead. Before I saw her step out of that apartment the murder had been done.

"Where was she when the awful crime was consummated?"

There was a horrible doubt in Stuart Harland's mind then.

"But, no, no, no, such a thing is so entirely inconsistent with Marion's character that the monstrous thought that she may be implicated in the murder of her own father cannot find a lodgment in my mind—never and never was she in the office at that hour; and why was she in such a state of terror when she left it?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Not that Kind of a Dog.

"Do you see that Japanese pug waiting for us in the road," inquired a Iowa wheelman of his companion, as they spun along the road the other night. "Yes; what about him?" "Well, if he don't get out of the way I'm going over him. A few kicks in his back will teach him to stay at home. He'll get out of there!" The dog did not run, but walked deliberately to the center of the road and stood in the moonlight. "Biff! Wharf!" Eight an hour later two wheelmen made a bonfire of two bicyclo suits. The Japanese pug proved to be a small spotted skunk.